

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 0411

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: BU, SHUM, PINS

SUBJECT: BULGARIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PSYCHIATRIC CLINICS

1. SUMMARY. ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BULGARIA (WHICH HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF WESTERN PRESS SPECULATION LATELY) IS CURRENTLY BEYOND THE CAPABILITY OF THIS EMBASSY. HOWEVER WE HAVE RECENTLY COME INTO POSSESSION OF A FAIRLY SOLID ITEM OF INFORMATION CONFIRMING THAT BULGARIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES HAVE ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION CLAPPED SOME POLITICAL OPPONENTS INTO A PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC. END SUMMARY.

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2. DECEMBER 20, 1976 ISSUE OF LE MONDE CARRIED REPORT FROM PARIS, ORIGINATING FROM INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE AGAINST REPRESSION, CONTAINING ALLEGATIONS FROM A "DOSSIER" PREPARED BY THE COMMITTEE THAT BULGARIA HAS SOME 20,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS CONFINED IN LABOR CAMPS, PRISONS, AND ALSO SOME IN PSYCHIATRIC CLINICS.

3. ALTHOUGH WE THINK THE FIGURES ARE PROBABLY INFLATED, THERE ARE CERTAINLY POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BULGARIA. HARD INFORMATION ON THEM IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN, BUT WE KNOW OF NO PROMINENT PERSON (OTHER THAN THE ERSTWHILE EXPATRIATE ARSOV ILIEV WHOSE 15-YEAR SENTENCE FOR SUBVERSIVEYCTIVITIES WAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED IN 1974) WHO IS IN JAIL. THAT SOME OPPONENTS MIGHT BE CONFINED IN PSYCHIATRIC CLINICS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PLAUSIBLE SUPPOSITION SINCE BULGARIA IS SO FAITHFUL IN EMULATING THE SOVIET UNION.

4. ON FEBRUARY 27, HOWEVER, WE CAME INTO POSSESSION OF INFORMATION THAT IS SOMEWHAT MORE CONCRETE ON THE MATTER OF CONFINEMENT IN PSYCHIATRIC CLINICS. IN RESPONSE TO BEING SHOWN THE LE MONDE ARTICLE, A RELIABLE BULGARIAN SOURCE GAVE AN EMBASSY OFFICER ONE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF THE PHENOMENON IN QUESTION. IN LATE FEBRUARY 1976, HE SAID, JUST PRIOR TO THE ELEVENTH BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS, A DOCTOR FRIEND OF SOURCE WAS WORKING TEMPORARILY AT A PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC IN SOFIA. ONE EVENING, HE REPORTED TO OUR SOURCE, A GROUP OF ABOUT FORTY MEN WAS BROUGHT IN UNDER POLICE (MILITSIA) GUARD, TO BE PROCESSED AND CONFINED IN THE CLINIC. COMMENTS AND ATTITUDE OF POLICE IN CHARGE MADE IT VERY CLEAR TO THE DOCTOR THAT THE PRISONERS WERE CONSIDERED "ENEMIES OF THE STATE" AND WERE BEING INTERNED AT LEAST FOR DURATION OF THE CONGRESS. ONE OFFICER REPORTEDLY SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, "WE DO NOT WANT THESE BEAUTIES SPITTING IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE FACE OF OUR LEADERS DURING THE CONGRESS." IT WAS ALSO VERY CLEAR TO THE DOCTOR THAT THE PRISONERS WERE NOT INSANE.

5. ON FEBRUARY 23, BULGARIAN PRESS CARRIED TWO ARTICLES STATING THAT HOSPITALIZATION OF SANE PEOPLE IN PSYCHIATRIC CLINICS, BY FORCE, EXISTS IN FRANCE, AROUSING "ANXIETY OF DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC OF FRANCE." SPECIFIC CASES ARE CITED AS "GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS." IT IS PROBABLY NOT TOO FAR-FETCHED TO SEE THESE TWO ARTICLES AS GOB RETALIATION FOR THE LE MONDE ARTICLE THAT BEGAN CIRCULATING IN SOFIA IN EARLY FEBRUARY.

6. AS A WRY FOOTNOTE TO BULGARIAN REACTION TO LE MONDE, WE MAY RECALL THAT LAST YEAR THAT PAPER CARRIED A LENGTHY INTERVIEW OF ZHIVKOV BY ANDRE

FONTAINE DURING WHICH THE BULGARIAN LEADER DECLARED
FLATLY, "THERE ARE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS IN
BULGARIA", A STATEMENT THAT WAS DISPLAYED WITHOUT
COMMENT BY THE FRENCH PAPER.

7. INFORMATION IN PARA 4 ABOVE SHOULD BE CLOSELY
HELD AS ITS APPEARANCE IN WESTERN PRESS REPORTS, RFE,
OR OTHER MEDIA COULD BE TIED TO SUB-SOURCE
AND SOME PERSONAL DANGER COULD BE INVOLVED FOR OUR
VALUABLE SOURCE, AS WELL AS LIKELIHOOD THAT HE
WOULD DRY UP.
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